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ABSTRACT

This ERIC Digest reports on the origins, purposes, and methods of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study. In 1993, the General Assembly of the IEA decided to carry out a two phase study of civic education. The goal of the two phase study was to identify and examine in a comparative framework the ways in which young people are prepared for their roles as citizens in democracies and societies aspiring to democracy. Both phases of the study were designed to provide information regarding 15 questions of interest to policymakers and educators. The three content domains covered in the study were: (1) democracy, democratic institutions, and citizenship; (2) national identity and international relations; and (3) social cohesion and diversity (including an understanding of discrimination). Phase 1 of the study was more qualitative and used interviews with experts on civic education, analyzed curriculum frameworks, national standards, and textbooks, and gathered information from focus groups. Twelve common themes were identified including: (1) there is a common core of content topics across countries; and (2) social diversity is an area of concern in nearly all countries participating in the study. Phase 2 of the study will analyze test data from 120,000 students aged 14 and 17-18 from the participating countries. The test instrument includes items about democratic principles, citizenship, political engagement, fact based instruction, and classroom climates. Teacher and school questionnaires also are to be administered. The release of the Phase 2 report will be in early 2001. (JH)

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The IEA Civic Education Study: Expectations and Achievements of Students in Thirty Countries

By Judith Torney-Purta, John Schwille, and Jo-Ann Amadeo

What are adolescents expected to know about democratic practices and institutions? How do societies convey a sense of national identity? What are young people taught about diversity and social cohesion? In short, what expectations do democratic societies hold for the development of political knowledge, skills, and attitudes among young people? And how does a country's political or economic situation influence these notions of citizenship and democracy? These questions were examined by researchers from countries in Europe, North and South America, Asia, and Australia during the first phase of the IEA Civic Education Study. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) is a consortium of educational research institutes in 53 countries (headquartered in Amsterdam). This Digest treats the origins, purposes, and methods of the IEA Civic Education Study.

Historical Perspective. In 1971, IEA conducted a study of civic education in nine countries including the U.S., Finland, Israel, Italy, and Germany (Torney, Oppenheim, and Farnen 1975). In the next decade and a half, interest in research on civic education declined. The early 1990s, however, saw several attempts to revive research about political socialization and civic education among political scientists (Niemi and Hepburn 1995) and psychologists (Haste and Torney-Purta 1992). A National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) took place in 1998 (Patrick 1997), and at the end of the decade a reanalysis of the 1988 NAEP data appeared (Niemi and Junn 1998). In 1993, the General Assembly of IEA decided to mount an ambitious two-phase study of civic education, the first phase more qualitative and the second more quantitative.

The IEA Civic Education Study of the 1990s. The goal of the current IEA Civic Education Study is to identify and examine in a comparative framework the ways in which young people are prepared for their roles as citizens in democracies and societies aspiring to democracy. The study focuses on the school but is not restricted to the formal curriculum. For purposes of the study, subjects related to civics are defined to include history, geography, government, and mother tongue studies (and religion in some countries). There are also attempts to foster citizenship across the curriculum without tying it to a specific subject.

Both phases of the study were designed to provide information regarding 15 questions of interest to policymakers and educators. For example, "what is the status of citizenship education as an explicit goal for schools?"

Three content domains are covered in the study: "Democracy, Democratic Institutions and Citizenship," "National Identity and International Relations," and "Social Cohesion and Diversity" (including an understanding of discrimination). These domains were chosen through vote by the study's National Research Coordinators.

The following countries participated in both phases of this study: Australia, Belgium (French), Bulgaria, Colombia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the United States. In addition, Canada and the Netherlands participated only in Phase 1. The following countries participated only in Phase 2: Chile, Chinese Taipei, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Norway, Slovak Republic, and Sweden.

Phase 1. The first and more qualitative phase of the study relied on national research coordinators in each country interviewing experts on civic education about expectations for adolescents. Researchers also analyzed curriculum frameworks, national standards, and textbooks. Focus groups were used in some countries. These data were summarized in answers to 18 "Case Study Framing Questions" on the expectations for student learning about topics such as elections, individual rights and obligations, national identity, relations with other nations, political parties, civil society, the role of the media, local problems, and links between economics and politics.

The first publication from the study, *Civic Education across Countries: Twenty-four National Case Studies from the IEA Civic Education Project* (Torney-Purta, Schwille, and Amadeo 1999) provides chapter-length summaries of these national case studies. An introductory chapter describes the study's theoretical framework and summarizes a dozen themes identified across countries, including the following:

- There is a common core of content topics across countries in civic education.
- There is unanimity among the authors of the national case studies that civic education should be based on important content that crosses disciplines, and that it should be "participative, interactive, related to life, conducted in a non-authoritarian environment, cognizant of the challenges of societal diversity, and

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co-constructed with parents, the community, and non-governmental organizations, as well as the school" (Torney-Purta, Schwille, and Amadeo 1999, 30). No country, however, has achieved these goals for all students.

- In all these countries there are courses designated to have specific responsibilities in this area, only some of which bear the label "civics." The goals of civic education are also addressed throughout the curriculum, the entire school day, and the cultures of the school and classroom. Out-of-school influences play a major role, too.

- There is a widely perceived gap between the goals for democracy expressed in the curriculum and the reality of the society and school. Implementing ambitious programs has been difficult, and there is concern about teacher preparation.

- Although educators often try to convey the excitement of the political process and the importance of participation, students frequently show a general disdain for politics. To counteract these tendencies, some countries employ student-generated projects or encourage youth to volunteer in their communities.

- Social diversity is an area where there is tremendous concern in nearly all of these nations, without much sense of the best direction for program development.

Phase 2. The national case studies contributed to the design of instruments for Phase 2 of the study, in which approximately 120,000 students age 14 and 17-18 from nationally representative samples were tested during 1999. The International Coordinating Center is at the Humboldt University of Berlin.

The instruments are not limited to the cognitive domain. It was nevertheless a priority to build a keyable test that was strong psychometrically and represented content that participating countries thought important. Over a two-year period, 38 multiple choice items measuring knowledge and skills (for 14-year-olds tested in 30 countries) and 42 items for an upper secondary population (tested in ten countries) were chosen from a pool of 140 items matched to the expectations for learning about democratic principles and issues cross-nationally. For both age groups there are also measures of students' concepts of democracy and citizenship, and scales assessing attitudes, that do not have correct answers.

Perhaps most importantly, items measuring political engagement and reported behaviors—actions and community service which the adolescent could perform—were included. Students were asked to which organizations they belonged and what political actions they expected to undertake as adults.

Finally, the study examines the influences of both fact-based instruction and the climate for expressing opinions in the classroom, as well as opportunities for participation in student government and in other organizations. In addition, it takes account of out-of-school influences such as the family or the media which may either reinforce or compete with what is presented in school. Teacher and School Questionnaires were also administered.

The Phase 2 Release Report, including basic tables and comparative analysis, will be made available to the press and the public in early 2001.

Conclusion. The recently enhanced interest in civic education programs across the world has not been matched by extensive evaluation or research. The IEA Civic Education Study, which is the collaborative work of researchers in more than 30 countries, takes a substantial step toward filling that gap. The initial publication of the current IEA Civic Education Study, *Civic Education across Countries: Twenty-four National Case Studies from the IEA Civic Education Project* (622 pages), is available from IEA (Amsterdam) or the National Council for the Social Studies (IEA's U.S. distributor). To order, call toll-free 1-800-683-0812 (#409501). The price of a single copy is $33.

References and ERIC Resources. The following list of resources includes references used to prepare this Digest. The items followed by an ED number are available in microfiche and/or paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, contact EDRS, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, Virginia 22153-2852; telephone numbers are (703) 440-1400 and (800) 443-3742. Entries followed by an EJ number, annotated monthly in CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION (CIJE), are not available through EDRS. However, they can be located in the journal section of most larger libraries by using the bibliographic information provided, requested through Interlibrary Loan, or ordered from commercial reprint services.

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